



**City of Kingston**  
**Report to Environment, Infrastructure & Transportation Policies Committee**  
**Report Number EITP-25-002**

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**To:** Chair and Members of the Environment, Infrastructure & Transportation Policies Committee

**From:** Brad Joyce, Commissioner, Infrastructure, Transportation & Emergency Services

**Resource Staff:** Karen Santucci, Director, Public Works & Solid Waste

**Date of Meeting:** December 10, 2024

**Subject:** Bird-Friendly City Certification

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**Council Strategic Plan Alignment:**

Theme: 2. Lead Environmental Stewardship and Climate Action

Goal: 2.3 Maintain the City's natural heritage and environmental assets.

**Executive Summary:**

The concept of Bird-Friendly City Certification is aimed at reversing the trend of declining wild bird populations and habitat loss, mostly due to human factors. It is a Nature Canada program that has financial support from the Government of Canada. At its basis, a Bird-Friendly City is a city that has taken steps to:

- Reduce threats to wild birds such as bird/window collisions, light pollution during migration, roaming cats, and pesticide use.
- Conserve, restore, and create bird habitat.
- Engage the public in bird conservation and appreciation, through education, awareness, action, and citizen science initiatives.

To obtain Bird-Friendly status, a certain number of points must be obtained in each category of criteria. The level that an applicant is awarded is equivalent to the lowest level achieved in each of the following three categories of criteria:

December 10, 2024

Page 2 of 11

- Threat reduction, habitat protection, restoration
- Climate resilience
- Community outreach/education

Many of the criteria include evidence of a policy and evidence of implementation of the policy. In many cases, actions to meet a criterion are community-based – not government. There are three certification levels of Bird-Friendly City status:

1. Entry Level
2. Intermediate Level
3. High Level

Staff conducted a review of the application process and determined that the City of Kingston would be close to meeting the Entry level certification. There are a number of items included on the 2023-2026 Strategic Plan that are scheduled for completion all before 2026 that would provide points towards this certification. That and the development of a dedicated webpage could ensure that the Entry level requirements are met. In second quarter of 2025, the City could be in position to apply for this certification.

Intermediate level certification would be more difficult to obtain with additional program development and additional budget requirements but could be considered in future years.

**Recommendation:**

**That** the Environment, Infrastructure & Transportation Policies Committee recommends to Council:

**That** staff be directed to submit a Bird-Friendly City application for the next application period in Q2 2025, with the goal of obtaining Entry level certification.

**December 10, 2024**

Page 3 of 11

**Authorizing Signatures:**

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY COMMISSIONER

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**Brad Joyce, Commissioner,  
Infrastructure, Transportation &  
Emergency Services**

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

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**Lanie Hurdle, Chief  
Administrative Officer**

**Consultation with the following Members of the Corporate Management Team:**

- |   |                                     |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| Paige Agnew, Commissioner, Growth & Development Services  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Jennifer Campbell, Commissioner, Community Services       | Not required                        |
| Neil Carbone, Commissioner, Corporate Services            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| David Fell, President & CEO, Utilities Kingston           | Not required                        |
| Desirée Kennedy, Chief Financial Officer & City Treasurer | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

**December 10, 2024**

Page 4 of 11

**Options/Discussion:**

**Background**

In the past 50 years, North American bird populations have decreased by more than 25%. Many of these losses can be attributed to human activities. Birds play an essential role in maintaining healthy and resilient ecosystems in our communities and our planet. Bird-Friendly City is an initiative which has been rolled out by Nature Canada. This program brings nature groups, municipal officials, and other community groups together to ensure our urban environments are safe havens for birds rather than a source of threat.

The goal of certification is to provide local partners with a clear standard that reflects what a city needs to do to make it safe for birds. In this sense, it can be considered a bird conservation strategy framework for a city. The standard is also a tool that allows for an independent assessment of how bird-friendly a particular city is at any moment in time, assessing performance on key issues, establishing benchmarks and allowing for measurement of progress over time and comparison with other cities.

The standard consists of a series of criteria or actions, each assigned a weighted score based on our assessment of the relative importance of each criterion within the three major categories of criteria that reflect what we believe to be the most important elements of a Bird-Friendly City:

- Reducing human-related threats to birds.
- Habitat protection, restoration, and climate resiliency.
- Community outreach/education.

There are three levels of Bird-Friendly City status: Entry, Intermediate and High. The minimum standard to achieve “Entry” status is approximately 50% of the possible points within each category. “Intermediate” status is attained by achieving from 65% to 80% of possible points, and “High” status is above 80%. All cities and towns that meet the standards would have some common elements, such as holding a World Migratory Bird Day event in their community, having a Bird Team, and promoting their status on the municipal website.

Certification is a badge of honor that tells the world that your municipality values birds and is trying to reverse their decline. The city would be issued a Bird-Friendly City Certificate for the appropriate level to recognize the contribution it has made in this regard. Certification provides a rigorous standard to measure impact and progress of the work while providing some flexibility to achieve. The program design allows cities and towns to choose what issues they want to work on and provides a pathway to do more to help birds.

**December 10, 2024**

Page 5 of 11

A Bird-Friendly City is a community where:

- Key threats (such as window and car collisions, and predation by domestic cats) to birds are effectively mitigated.
- Nature is restored so native bird populations can thrive.
- Residents are actively engaged in appreciating and monitoring local bird populations.
- Organizations are creating events to protect birds.
- Progressive municipal policies are created to protect urban bird populations.
- A bird team has been created to oversee and lead initiatives.

26 municipalities within Canada have met one of the three levels of certification. The certification level awarded responds to the lowest level attained in any of the three categories of the Bird-Friendly City criteria. 18 of the municipalities have achieved Entry level Certification, while five have reached Intermediate level, and three have attained High level. As evident from the lists below, the breadth of municipality sizes and types clearly indicates that this can be accomplished in a growing community such as Kingston.

In Ontario, these municipalities are certified Bird-Friendly:

<b>Level</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>Population</b>
Entry	Barrie	148,000
Entry	Halton Hills	63,000
Entry	Hamilton	570,000
Entry	Kawartha Lakes	79,000
Entry	King Township	27,000
Entry	Peterborough	84,000
Entry	Richmond Hill	202,000
Entry	Selwyn	19,000
Entry	Vaughan	323,000
Intermediate	Windsor	230,000
Intermediate	Burlington	190,000

December 10, 2024

Page 6 of 11

Level	City	Population
Intermediate	Guelph	144,000
High	Toronto	2,890,000
High	London	423,000

For other provinces, the following municipalities are certified Bird-Friendly:

Level	City	Population
Entry	Hudson, QC	5,000
Entry	Dorval, QC	19,000
Entry	Halifax, NS	440,000
Entry	Calgary, AB	1,307,000
Entry	Edmonton, AB	1,010,000
Entry	Devon, AB	7,000
Entry	Regina, SK	226,000
Entry	Lions Bay, BC	1,400
Entry	Saanich, BC	118,000
Intermediate	Strathcona County, AB	99,000
Intermediate	Vancouver, BC	663,000
High	Sainte-Ann-de-Bellevue, QC	5,000

**Analysis**

In determining where the City of Kingston would score, staff have completed the application with the programs that we currently have in place. There is opportunity for Kingston to develop in all the evaluated areas. The following are the three categories under the program.

December 10, 2024

Page 7 of 11

## Threat Reduction

In this category, the following areas are considered:

- Regulatory and educational measures taken to help control and reduce populations of cats roaming at large.
- Demonstration that your municipality is taking measures to reduce window collisions.
- Municipality has a light pollution reduction strategy and supports actions to reduce light pollution, particularly during migratory seasons.
- Municipality has a policy to reduce or eliminate non-essential pesticide use that directly or indirectly harms birds, on public and private land that is implemented through local bylaws.
- Municipality takes regulatory measures and encourages voluntary measures to reduce the amount of plastic waste generated (e.g., banning of single-use plastics).
- Measures are in place to reduce bird collisions with vehicles such as lower speed limits when passing through important bird habitat, and measures to reduce the number of vehicles on the roads.
- Municipality has policy and practices to prohibit or mitigate disturbance of birds from humans or their pets at natural areas or important bird habitat (e.g., leash by-law, no-go zones certain times of year).

There is a requirement to get 10 points in this section to obtain Entry level certification. The following is a list of points that we may receive based on our current programs:

1. Having a TNVR (Trap/Neuter/Vaccinate/Release) program for feral cats.
2. Retrofitting of streetlights to downward directional, wildlife-friendly LED lights.
3. Outreach campaign for residents and businesses to reduce external lighting that attracts nocturnal migrant birds.
4. Bans of cosmetic use of pesticides.
5. Municipal programs to reduce the user of single-use plastics, such as shopping bags.
6. Measures to reduce bird collisions with vehicles, such as lower speed limits and signs or measures to reduce the number of vehicles on the road such as good transit and cycling infrastructure.
7. Municipality has policy and practices to prohibit or mitigate disturbance of birds from humans or their pets at natural areas or important bird habitats.

The City would likely score seven out of the required 10 points for Entry level certification based on the above. With the adoption of a Bird-Friendly City communications plan and webpage, the City could begin to share and promote information regarding risk reduction in these areas and gain three additional points in the following areas:

1. Having a webpage that discourages cat owners that allow their cats to roam outdoors.

**December 10, 2024**

Page 8 of 11

2. Provide information and education for property owners and tenants of measures they can take to mitigate bird collision risks.
3. Providing information to allow individuals or groups both working for and residents of the City of Kingston to report window collisions through BirdSafe. This work could be completed in the first four months of 2025 to submit the application in Q2 of 2025.

All this work could be completed with current resources and budget.

In order to obtain Intermediate certification in this category, the City would need to further develop programs in order to obtain an additional three points. Potentially this might be accomplished through work in the areas of window collisions and light pollution. To obtain three points in each of these categories, additional resources would have to be invested into program research, development, community engagement, implementation and communications. It is expected that the costs associated with the development of these two programs would be approximately \$60,000.

### **Habitat Protection, Restoration and Climate Resiliency**

In this category, the following items are considered:

1. Natural areas within the municipal boundaries are protected through the Municipal Official Plan, and there is a commitment to increase the area.
2. The Municipality has a strategy to protect and restore the biological diversity in parks and natural areas.
3. The Municipality has a climate change adaptation strategy which includes nature-based climate solutions.
4. The Municipality has a habitat management strategy and a strategy to increase the number of trees.
5. The Municipality has snag retention in natural areas.
6. The Municipality is protecting trees on private and public property.
7. The Municipality prohibits active vegetation management during breeding season on municipal lands.
8. The Municipality has Important Bird Area (IBA) nearby.
9. The Municipality promotes the importance of planting natural flora.

In this area, there are currently four strategic goals that staff are in the process of completing that would impact this application: the natural heritage study, review of the operational plan, tree by-law review, and review of the climate change adaptation strategy. There is possibility that the City would score the required 10 points to achieve Entry level through the following:

1. The City has protected natural spaces in the current Official Plan.
2. The adoption of the Montreal Pledge and its support from Council on March 19, 2024, may provide one point, however, it might also need to be supported by identification of actions required to ensure Biodiversity.



**December 10, 2024**

Page 9 of 11

3. The City of Kingston has a Climate Leadership Plan, along with several strategic priorities related to climate leadership and environmental stewardship.
4. The City has in its Strategic Plan the goal to increase the tree canopy to 30%, (also would need actions to obtain this).
5. Evidence that the City has begun Snap retention (leaving a specified length of tree trunk standing as habitat for birds and animals) in specified situations.
6. The existing tree by-law has some wording around tree protection on private property along with the goal in the Strategic Plan to continue to strengthen tree protection on private property.
7. Wording used by our forestry staff as part of our development approvals around the protection of birds and vegetation management during migratory bird season.
8. Programs that are aimed at supporting native flora in landscaping and municipal land management.
9. The City has evidence of stewardship programs to improve breeding or stopover habitat.
10. The City's Climate Change Adaptation Plan is expected to be presented to Council in Q1 2025.

All this work could be completed with current resources and budget.

Intermediate level certification would require a minimum of 12 points, which likely would not be achievable without further program development and additional resources. Most likely, these programs would fall into the realms of biological diversity, climate change resilience, and native flora. Program development associated with these three areas would cost the City approximately \$50,000 in operational costs.

### **Community Outreach/Education**

In this category, a campaign to name the bird species of Kingston could be run in coordination with the rollout of the City's Bird-Friendly webpage. This would ensure that adequate points are established to ensure a certification at the Entry level in this category. A Bird-Friendly City Committee would be set up and would assist in ensuring the information provided is appropriate and can then be utilized on partner sites. A total of seven points is required to reach Entry level in this area. It is expected that the City's application would receive points in the following areas:

1. Having educational programs and activities for children and youth about birds and nature in the municipality.
2. Having an organization that does specific bird related programs for children and youth.
3. Having publicly accessible local birding areas.
4. Being able to identify bird-friendly businesses (minimum three businesses).
5. Having active participatory science programs to monitor birds in the city.

Additional points could be gained if time and resources were made available to complete the following:

**December 10, 2024**

Page 10 of 11

1. Develop a campaign to select a “City Bird”.
2. Identify bird-friendly businesses on a City webpage.
3. Have or assist a partner group in providing a display to educate citizens on the benefits of bird-friendly actions.
4. Provide public access to resources (web links, etc. on the benefits of birds and best practices) on a City website or social media.

The implementation of the above-mentioned criteria would meet the requirements for both Entry and Intermediate certification. All this work could be completed with current resources and budget.

### **Public Engagement**

The following organizations were consulted through the process of gathering information for this report: Kingston Field Naturalists, Cataraqui Conservation Area, Sandy Pines Wildlife Centre, Little Forests Kingston, and Master Gardeners. These groups were consulted to get their feedback and advise on completion of the application, both in person and over email. All participants were in favour of the City obtaining certification and increasing efforts to make Kingston a Bird-Friendly City. All participants were excited to be involved and many have agreed to be part of the working group. Once the working group has been established, public engagement on the application process would flow through this group.

### **Climate Risk Considerations**

This program will have positive effects on supporting the biodiversity of bird species in the city.

### **Indigenization, Inclusion, Diversity, Equity & Accessibility (IIDEA) Considerations**

As part of the Bird-Friendly application process, there is a requirement to recognize that all of Canada is still within the traditional territory or unceded territory of Indigenous Peoples. Through respect of this fact, and the inherent rights of Indigenous Peoples, an Indigenous perspective is required to be included in this program. Applicants are encouraged to seek the perspective and invite individuals to represent and participate in the initiative. As such, staff would engage with the Indigenous community and receive their perspective and feedback.

### **Existing Policy/By-Law**

Animal Control By-Law – By-Law Number 2021-166

City of Kingston Official Plan

Tree By-law – By-Law Number 2018-15

City of Kingston Strategic Plan 2023–2026

**December 10, 2024**

Page 11 of 11

Climate Leadership Plan, 2021

**Financial Considerations**

In order to apply for an Entry level certification, expenses are expected be minimal (less than \$5,000) and could be absorbed within the normal operating budgets. A Bird-Friendly City certification is valid for two years, after which the municipality must reapply. In the year between initial approval and recertification, the City must provide a report card to show that it is still meeting the criteria that approval had been achieved for, but the cost of that is also expected to be minimal. The operational costs required to develop the programs to obtain Intermediate certification are estimated to be in the \$110,000 range. It is recommended that the City apply for Entry level certification in 2025.

**Contacts:**

Karen Santucci, Director, Public Works & Solid Waste, 613-546-4291 extension 1854

**Other City of Kingston Staff Consulted:**

Julie Salter-Keane, Manager, Climate Leadership, Climate Leadership Division

Kyle Compeau, Director, Licensing & Enforcement, Licensing and Enforcement

Speros Kanellos, Director Facility Management & Construction, Facility Management & Construction Services

Vanessa Mensah, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Manager, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion

Ruth Noordegraaf, Director, Community Development & Wellbeing and IIDEA

Paul MacLatchy, Environment Director, Environment

Tim Park, Director, Planning Services, Planning Services

Lisa Capener-Hunt, Director, Building Services & CBO, Building Services

Kelsey Pye, Communications Officer, Communications & Public Engagement

**Exhibits Attached:**

None